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IEMA Encourages People to Prepare for Earthquakes

Preparedness actions can prevent injuries, reduce property damage

SPRINGFIELD – Just over 200 years ago, parts of Illinois and several other states in the Central U.S. were rocked by some of the largest earthquakes ever recorded in North America, with the strongest quakes estimated to be around magnitude 8.0.

In recognition of the earthquake risk still posed today by the New Madrid and Wabash Valley seismic zones in southern Illinois, the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) and local emergency management agencies will promote earthquake preparedness throughout February.

“Two hundred years ago, the Central U.S. was sparsely populated,” said IEMA Director James Joseph. “A similar earthquake today would have a devastating impact on millions of people in the region. While we can’t predict when the next major temblor will occur, we can help people learn how to protect themselves and reduce damage to their homes.”

Joseph noted that the actual movement of the ground in an earthquake is seldom the direct cause of death or injury. Most casualties result from falling objects and debris caused by the earth shaking.

Learning how to “Drop, Cover and Hold On” can help people prevent injury during an earthquake. The phrase reminds people to drop down to the floor, take cover under a sturdy desk, table or other furniture, and hold on to that object and be prepared to move with it until the shaking ends.

There are several steps people can take to help prevent injuries and property damage at home, including:

- Strapping water heaters and large appliances to wall studs
- Anchoring overhead light fixtures
- Fastening shelves to wall studs and securing cabinet doors with latches
- Strapping TVs, computers and other heavy equipment to prevent tipping
- Learning how to shut off gas, water and electricity in case the lines are damaged

More information about earthquake preparedness is available at www.Ready.Illinois.gov. Earthquake safety tips will also be posted throughout February on the Ready Illinois Facebook (www.facebook.com/ReadyIllinois) and Twitter (twitter.com/ReadyIllinois) pages.

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